

BOOK REVIEW

Sir Thomas Browne, 1605-1682, and the Baroque. Catalogue of an Exhibition. Royal College of Physicians of London, 1982. pp. v & 35.

IT is difficult to review an exhibition one has not seen and knows only from its catalogue. One lacks its visual impact but one does have its idea, its plan, its content, and its scholarship. Dennis Cole's sensible introduction tells us that the purpose was to present Sir Thomas Browne as a literary artist writing in the baroque style and to place him in the setting of other baroque artists in architecture, painting, sculpture, garden design, and even music. He takes into account the evolution of the baroque style from the mannerism that was dominant in Browne's youth as well as the problems of applying stylistic labels and transferring a term developed by art historians to literature. The exhibition is supplemented by a handful of items relating to Browne's son Edmund, who was a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, a censor, and treasurer from 1694 to 1704.

Most of the 50 items that set Browne among his English and continental contemporaries come from the collection of Sir Geoffrey Keynes and include first and early editions of *Religio Medici*, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, *Urn Burial*, and *The Garden of Cyrus*. The fine arts are represented by both colored and black and white reproductions of such works as Caius Cibber's monument to Thomas Sackville in Withyham Church, Sussex, John Evelyn's plan for the garden at Sayes Court, Deptford, Wren's model for St. Paul's, Bernini's bust of Louis XIV, Lely's portrait of Charles II, Bernardo's portrait of Monteverdi, and many other items designed to show the diverse forms that late mannerism and the baroque assumed in the arts and humanities. In so eclectic an exhibition, designed to be displayed in limited space, selection is all important, and the choices seem carefully and critically made.

The value of the catalogue lies in its scholarship and the unaffected style in which documentation and the relevance of each item are presented. It contains information not easily accessible without consulting many disparate sources, hence of considerable value to specialists in the period.

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